

**VETERANS BENEFITS AWARENESS TASK FORCE**  
**MISSOURI VETERANS COMMISSION**  
**Friday, January 18, 2002 — 3:00 PM**  
**Harry S. Truman State Office Building, Room 400**  
**Jefferson City, MO**

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In attendance:

**Barbara Bundy**, Womens Veterans Coordinator Regional Office Dept. Veterans Affairs; **Aquilla Butler**, Governor's Office Boards and Commissions; **Gary Campbell**, Director Columbia VA Hospital, representing Patricia Crosetti, CEO Heartland Veterans Health Network; **Sandi Davenport**, Public Affairs Officer Regional Office Dept. Public Affairs; **Phillip Driskill**, Executive Director Oklahoma Department of Veterans Affairs; **John Eckhoff**, Veterans Service Manager St. Louis County Dept. of Human Services; **Ralph Durnbaugh**, Director Veterans Benefits Awareness; **Joseph Frank**, Member Missouri Veterans Commission; **James Hughes**, State Jr. Vice Commander MO, Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States; **Lt. Governor Joe Maxwell**, State of Missouri; **Bonnie McNeill-Boyt**, Training Technician, Missouri Veterans Commission; **Samuel McVay**, Executive Director, Missouri Veterans Commission; **Jim Morris**, Director Public Information, Department of Elementary and Secondary Education; **Carl H. Niewoehner**, Chairman, Missouri Veterans Commission; **Paul Pealer**, Adjutant, Disabled American Veterans of MO; **General Shull**, State of Missouri, Adjutant General Office; **Stan Smith**, Administrator Warrensburg Home; Missouri Veterans Commission; **Jill Talken**, Executive Secretary, Missouri Veterans Commission; **Ronald Taylor**, Associate Director, Missouri Veterans Commission; **Tuck VanDyne**, Lt. Governor's Office; **James (Jim) Whitfield**, Western Area Coordinator MO Military Funeral Homes; **Hal Dulle**, Assistant to the Director, Missouri Veterans Commission.

- I. Opening Remarks** – Joe Maxwell, Lt. Governor, State of Missouri, thanked members for coming and expressed his satisfaction with the action plan the task force has taken. The Response to Application Committee hosted a meeting on Thursday, January 17, at St. Louis Regional VA Office for the purpose to increase veteran awareness to Supervisors, Service Organization Leaders, VA Representatives. Goals were discussed and their input was greatly appreciated to help guide the task force. Lt. Governor explained to the members that sequencing is required to be successful. We must develop a sequence and finish with action plan to present to the Joint Committee on Veterans Affairs on January 22. Timing is everything in life and the window has opened for us to deliver an effective message that will assist the veterans whom reside in our state. Understand the time is here and timing is important, our job is to develop a plan that has a time line to deliver. Our mission in delivery, is to raise awareness to such a level that the veterans currently not receiving benefits for which they have earned, will become aware that those benefits are available and we will have someone within the silo of government standing ready to help those veterans process their claims.
- II. Updates** - Sam McVay, Executive Director, Missouri Veterans Commission, welcomed the task force to the second meeting of the Veterans Benefits Awareness Task Force. Sam updated the task force on the following issues:
- A) Speakers Bureau
  - B) Benefits Supermarkets
  - C) Web Page Development
  - D) 800 Number
  - E) Development of Joint Projects with VSO's
  - F) Partnership with Gaming Association
  - G) Guard Distance Learning Centers
  - H) University of Missouri Resources
  - I) VA Resources

- J) Southeast Area Agency on Aging
- K) Possible Contacts with National Advertising Council
- L) Sequential Process

Accomplishments:

- A) Strategy
- B) Concept of Organization – need development of structure

Two Thrusts:

- A) Media Blitz
- B) Grass Roots – sustained
  - speeches
  - benefits supermarkets

Ralph Durnbaugh,, Director Veterans Benefits Awareness reported on his visit to Oklahoma Department of Veterans Affairs. (attachment)

Jim Whitfield, Jack Mathews and Frank Green have signed incorporation papers to form the Missouri Veterans Commission Foundation. The funds will be used for increasing benefits awareness, build relationships with communities and boost employee morale and welfare.

### **III. Veterans Benefits Awareness Task Groups Reports:**

- A) Message Development Committee – Stan Smith, Administrator Warrensburg Home; Missouri Veterans Commission: Operation Mobilize(attachment)
- B) Message Delivery Committee – Ronald Taylor, Associate Director, Missouri Veterans Commission: 1.) The Message Delivery Committee has agreed to seek to hire a Media Coordinator to assist with advertising. Ron will coordinate with Veteran Service Organizations on promoting non-state money in order to fund this position. 2.) The committee has agreed to advertise by print media and radio. TV advertisement is also being considered. Advertising on billboards and possible news story series on VA benefits will help in metro areas to get the message delivered. 3.) National Guard distance learning network was addressed. General Shull will be speaking with their communications office in reference to utilizing these services in order to reach local community leaders, service organizations and local media and will have them contact Ron. 4.) MVC awarded grants to Service Organizations to support veteran benefits programs. MAVO represents more than 22 state organizations and has many local media connections, may run message in their publications. General Shull will contact Dalton Wright (Ret.), President of Association of US Army, owner Wright Communications in Lebanon to seek assistance. We may consider contacting National Advertising Counsel. 5.) Sandy Davenport attended Media Relations Meeting on Wednesday with VA and will report back to Ron advising whether VA can provide assistance. 6.) Benefits Supermarkets at National Guard Armory's will be done. John Eckhoff will be chairing statewide Veterans Supermarkets committee and has committed to MVC to chair three Veterans Supermarkets in the St. Louis area to promote veterans benefits awareness.
- C) Response to Application Committee – Ralph Durnbaugh, Director Veterans Benefits Awareness, representing Gary Williams: 1.) 800 Number is priority; 2.) Educate the officers about the program.
- D) Resource Development Committee – Carl Niewoehner, Chairman, Missouri Veterans Commission: Working to get contacts with corporations for donations. Large gifts will go into the foundation. MVC is in the process of filing a 5013C

recognition with the IRS. A draft of the message presentation that will be used to collect money will be completed within the next two weeks for committee approval. Lt. Governor Maxwell advised that Political Director, Luke McFarland from Lt. Governor's office will be attending meetings pertaining to this project.

Joseph Frank made a motion to adopt the report "Operation Mobilize VetBenefits ". Paul Pealer seconded the motion. By a voice vote, the motion passed unanimously. The Lt. Governor will call for a meeting of the committee chairs to fill in the time line dates.

Suggestions made that task force conduct a joint organizational educational event once a year to provide proper training to MVC Service Officers, Service Organization Officers and VA Veterans Benefits Counselors.

Lt. Governor Maxwell made a request to prepare a one-page presentation to inform all veterans service organization commanders and vice commanders of what VBATF is currently working on and what will be coming in the near future, to be distributed at January 22, Joint Committee Meeting and MAVO Meeting.

Lt. Governor Maxwell suggested a concise document/directory for all officers that would contain State, Federal and Organizations information to be provided to veterans.

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned.